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did not make her appearance; she absented herself merely to excite interest, and that a number of inquiries might be made after her. In short, she found it impossible to please her mother-in-law, let her conduct herself in what manner she would, or how irreproachable soever her behaviour might appear in the eyes of others.

(*To be Continued.*)

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

The following Petition and Answer, remind us of the favourable hopes excited and justified by the commencement of the French Revolution. They form a curious document worthy of preservation. The petition suitably states the peculiar doctrines of the Quakers, and claims protection for them. The answer of Mirabeau pronounces some sublime truths on the sacred right of private judgment, independent of the religion of the state, and forcibly demonstrates that opinions merely as such, where no breaches of morality appear, ought not to be cognizable by the legislature. Happy would it be if the liberal sentiments on this subject of religious opinions were interwoven as fundamental principles into all codes of laws, and formed a rule for the conduct of all sects towards each other, and also for the treatment of their own members, when diversity of opinion might happen to prevail among them.

THE RESPECTFUL PETITION OF THE
FRIENDS OF THE CHRISTIAN SOCIETY,
CALLED QUAKERS.

*Delivered to the National Assembly,
10th of 2d mo. 1791.*

RESPECTABLE LEGISLATORS,

THE French nation having chosen
you its law-givers, and your

minds being disposed to give to her wise laws, our hearts have been lively excited to solicit your justice and beneficence on behalf of the society of the peaceable christians to which we belong.

You know that there exists in several parts of Europe and North America, a great number of christians distinguished by the name of Quakers, who profess to serve God according to the ancient simplicity of the primitive christian church:— There are in many towns and villages of Languedoc a number of families attached to this primitive christianity. Several families came from America to settle at Dunkirk, under the auspices of the former government, on an invitation given to the inhabitants of the island of Nantucket, with a view to extend the French fisheries. These Islanders have proved by their success, that they merit your favour, and the same exertions will cause them to continue to merit it; but interests far more exalted bring us this day before you.

In an age, wherein light hath made a rapid progress, you have discovered that conscience (the immediate communication of man with his Maker) cannot be subjected to the power of men. This sentiment of justice hath inclined you to decree general liberty to all worship. This is one of the most excellent decrees of the French legislation; you have given a great example to those nations who still persecute religious opinions, an example we hope they will follow sooner or later.

It is to this spirit of justice we apply for liberty peaceably to follow certain principles and maxims, which the great society of friends called Quakers have invariably supported since their earliest origin. One of these principles hath drawn upon us severe but unavailing persecu-

tions. Providence has strengthened us to bear them without using violence: It is this principle which forbids us on any pretext to take up arms, and to slay men, a principle agreeable to Holy Scripture, Christ having said, "Return not evil for evil, but do good to your enemies." May the Lord grant that this principle be universally adopted, all mankind would only then be one family and brotherhood, united by mutual kindnesses: You are convinced of this, ye generous Frenchmen; you have already begun to reduce it to practice, ye have decreed never to imbrue your hands in the blood of conquest. This step leads you—it leads the whole world towards universal peace: Ye will not then look with hostile eyes on the men who hasten the coming thereof by their example, and who have given proof in Pennsylvania that vast establishments can be set up and supported without military forces or the effusion of human blood.

Subject to your laws we only claim the liberty of being here as in other places, brethren to all mankind, and not to be obliged to arm our hands against any. England and the United States of America, where our brethren are in far greater numbers than in France, have suffered us peaceably to enjoy this grand principle of our religion, without looking on us as useless members of society.

We have still one request more, and we hope you will not refuse it us, because it flows from these principles of justice which you revere. We have preserved in registering of our marriages, births, and burials, the simplicity of the primitive church, our maxims forbid us forms which are useless, yet it is a rule amongst us, to prove these events of life in due order; we request that our simple register may be sufficient to le-

galize our marriages and births, and to prove our burials, making a declaration of them before a magistrate.

Finally, we request to be exempted from all forms of oaths, Christ having expressly forbid them in these terms. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto you, Swear not at all, (or in any manner), but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay." Wise legislators, you are persuaded as well as we, that the form of an oath adds nothing to good faith, that it adds nothing to the declaration of an honest man, and that it does not deter perjurers: You agree that the oath is but a peculiar mode of expressing a declaration: We hope you will not refuse to hear us in ours: It is that of our common Master, it is that of Christ. We hope that none will accuse us of wishing to evade the great intention of the civic oath. We are ready to declare, that we will abide faithful to the constitution which you have established—We cherish and respect it, and our intention is to conform to its laws in all their purity. On the other hand, if our words, if our judicial depositions are not found conformable to truth, we submit to the punishment due to false witnesses and perjurers.

Would you hesitate, respectable legislators, to lend a favourable ear to our petition. Cast your eyes upon the history of our society: In the countries where it hath been established, more than a century hath elapsed without our ever being found concerned in any conspiracy against the government. Our strict morality forbids us ambition and luxury, a strict and domestic watchfulness over each other, tends to preserve us in the practice and manners which

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our Lord hath inculcated by his doctrines and example. Labour is in our view an indispensable duty enjoined to all men. This precept hath made us active and industrious, thus our society accords with France in this point. Giving us a favourable reception, you invite industry, who now seeks those countries where the honest industrious man is not apprehensive of seeing persecution destroy in one quarter of an hour, the fruits of an hundred years' labour.

Now that France is about to become the asylum of liberty, of an equality of rights, of an happy fraternal union; that she is uniting to these sources of prosperity, a liberty for every individual to follow his conscience in its intercourse with the supreme Being, since she is so happily situated by nature, what advantages shall she not derive from those of our society, who live in less favourable climates, as soon as they shall know that you grant them the same civil and religious liberty which they enjoy in England, and in the United States of America.

Such is the respectful petition which our hearts have been excited to offer you, for the peace of our brethren of France, and the prosperity of a country which is dear to us. We hope, that in the midst of your great exertions to renovate this empire, and multiply the sources of its happiness, you will extend over us and our offspring your justice and beneficence: Thus shall you deserve a requital from our Creator, and the love of all good men.

(Signed) JEAN MARCILLAC,
WILLIAM ROTCH,
BENJAMIN ROTCH.

THE PRESIDENT, MIRABEAU'S ANSWER.

THE Quakers, who have disclaimed persecutors and tyrants, could not address themselves to any lawgivers with more confidence than to those

who (the first in France) have reduced to laws the rights of men.— And may France, when renovated, may France hereafter in the very bosom of peace, whose interests she will always hold inviolably dear, become also another happy Pennsylvania.

As a philanthropic system your principles demand our admiration; they remind us that the original of each society was a family united by its manners, its affections, and its wants, and without doubt the most sublime institutions would be those, which creating a second time the human species, bring it back to this first and virtuous origin.

The examination of your principles considered as opinions, concerns us no more. We have declared that there is a property which no man wishes to make common; the movements of his soul, and the transports of his mind. This sacred inheritance places man in a hierarchy more exalted than social state. As a citizen, he adopts a form of government; as a thoughtful being, he has no country here but the universe.

As religious principles, your doctrine shall not be the object of our deliberations: The communion of every man with the Most High is independent of all political institution. Between God, and the heart of man, what government dares to interfere!

As social maxims, your claims ought to be submitted to the discussion of the legislative body. It will examine if the forms that you observe, to prove births and marriages gives authenticity enough to this filiation of the human species, that the distinction of properties render indispensable, independent of good morals. It will examine, if a declaration, the falsity of which would be subject to the penalties established against false witnesses and perjurers, would not in reality be a